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TRANSMITTAL SLIP		DATE 2 Feb 83
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FORM NO. 241
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2 February 1983

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Talking Points on Israeli Politics

On the Israeli domestic scene, meanwhile, both the government and the opposition are awaiting the report of the commission investigating the Beirut massacres due to be released mid-month.

- Some within the Labor opposition hope the findings will be grave enough to cause defections from Begin's coalition--especially by the National Religious Party--that might permit the formation of a new Labor-led government.

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- More likely would be an attempt by Begin to maneuver his coalition partners into a cabinet resignation and new elections. He would clearly like to take advantage of his popularity in the polls to gain a new mandate, but needs the assent of other coalition leaders who fear their parties would lose in early elections.

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- If the findings are not too damaging, Begin may ride them out. Some observers have speculated that Defense Minister Sharon may be ousted or moved to another post (possibly as foreign minister) if he comes in for heavy criticism. We think Begin will try to avoid this, but Sharon's influence could be diminished--at least temporarily.

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[REDACTED]

President Navon's decision not to seek a new term has introduced some political uncertainties.

-- Polls show he would be the most popular choice to lead the Labor Party in new elections. One recent poll indicates a Navon-led Labor Party and Begin's Likud would both win 50 seats in the 120-seat Knesset if elections were held now.

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-- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] former Prime Minister Rabin has made it clear he wants the party leadership. Navon has said he is not interested in contesting for the position, although he would probably take it if offered.

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-- Navon is a veteran politician, but is largely untested in the rough-and-tumble of Israeli politics. Even sympathetic observers question whether he could hold his own in an election battle against Begin. [REDACTED]

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2 February 1983

Talking Points on Developments in Syria

The most important political and military development since June has been the strengthened Soviet commitment to Syria, represented by the deployment of the SA-5 surface-to-air missile. The relationship has evolved through three stages in the past year. [REDACTED]

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Pre-Invasion: Syria woos the Soviets

-- In reaction to Israeli defacto annexation of the Golan in December 1981, and fearing an Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Syria tried to get a Soviet commitment to come to its aid in the form of a Strategic Alliance. -- The USSR demured. [REDACTED]

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Post Invasion: Recriminations

-- Syria accused the Soviets of selling them inadequate weaponry, and of not coming to Syria's aid when needed. The Soviets said the weapons were good, but mishandled. Nevertheless they sent a team to investigate. [REDACTED]

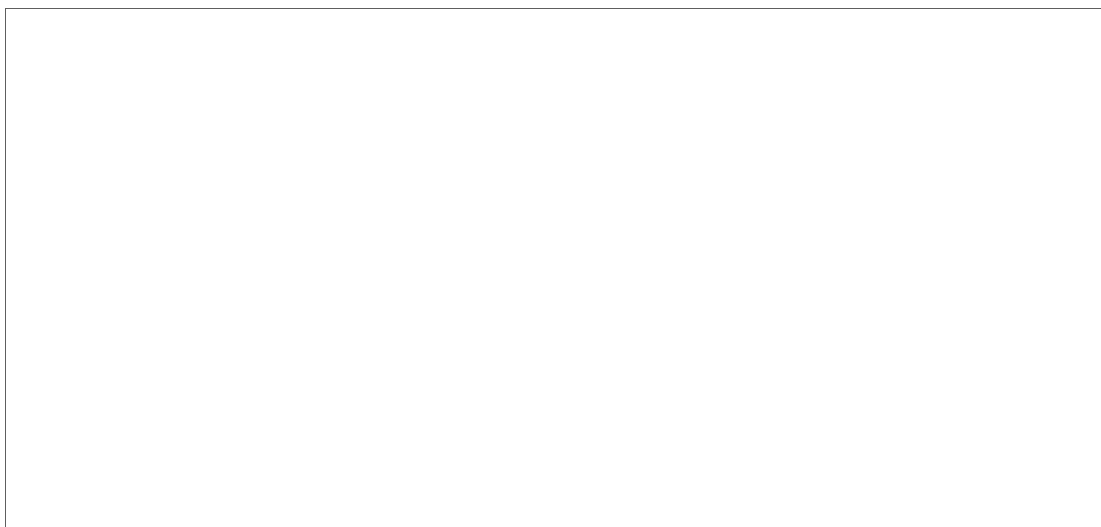
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There are no indications that Syria has made any concessions to the Soviets in return for the SA-5 other than those implicit in the Soviet manning of the SA-5.

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- Syria has relinquished control over some of its air defense to the Soviets and apparently is not certain of a Soviet commitment to come to Syria's assistance should fighting be limited to Lebanon.
- Nevertheless, Syria probably believes it has a Soviet commitment to defend Syria proper, and probably counts on being able to persuade the Soviets to provide support in the event of an Israeli attempt to evict Syrian forces from Lebanon.

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Syria's relations with the PLO and other Arab states.

Syria's relations with the PLO, always strained, have deteriorated and Syria's control/influence over the PLO has diminished with the PLO evacuation of Beirut.

- Syria, fearing a rapprochement between Jordan and PLO has tried to rein in Arafat, both politically through radical PLO factions, and by veiled threats to intimidate the PLO leader.

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Syria remains implacably hostile to Iraq and unwilling to end its support of Tehran in the Iran-Iraq war.

- Syria reportedly rejected a recent overture to improve relations with Iraq and reopen the oil pipeline through Syria to the Mediterranean. [REDACTED]

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Assad's attendance at the Fez Summit and apparent concurrence with the modified Fahd Plan indicated a softening of Syria's hardline opposition to peace negotiations.

- Syria's apparent softening was probably a tactical ploy adopted under the threat of an Israeli eviction of Syrian troops in Lebanon and in fear of standing alone in the Arab World.
- Recent discussions among the Libyan, Syrian, and Iranian Foreign Ministers in Damascus suggest that Syria may be trying to reconstitute a radical coalition to oppose, among other things, major Lebanese concessions to the Israelis. [REDACTED]

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Syria continues to profess its willingness to withdraw from Lebanon if-asked by the Lebanese government and if Israel also withdraw.

- Syria is in no hurry, however, and probably hopes that negotiations will drag on interminably. An Israeli withdrawal would be in Syria's interest and it is likely that Syrian forces will depart with the Israelis.

- Syrian political influence in Lebanon will be jealously guarded by Damascus, however. [REDACTED]

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2 February 1983

Talking Points on Lebanon

After four months in office, Lebanese President Amin Jumayyil has not been able to exert central government authority beyond the capital.

- In reality, his influence does not extend beyond West Beirut--the East is still firmly in the hands of the Phalange-dominated Lebanese Forces militia--and Jumayyil is jokingly referred to as the president of the "Duchy of Hamra Street," West Beirut's fashionable shopping district.
- Jumayyil is unable to make progress on vital domestic issues--reconstruction, economic development, or political reform--until progress is made in the current diplomatic efforts to win the withdrawal of Syrian, PLO, and Israeli forces from Lebanon.

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The current stalemate in negotiations with Israel places Jumayyil in a no win situation.

- He is under increasing pressure from the Lebanese Forces militia to give in to Israeli demands for what amounts to a peace treaty.
- While Jumayyil might be willing to go along way toward satisfying Israeli demands "informally" after an Israeli troop withdrawal, he knows that Lebanon's fragile political consensus will not permit him to enter into an ironclad agreement head on.

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Muslim and leftist groups initially willing to cooperate with Amin are increasingly disillusioned with his leadership.

-- They are disturbed by his failure to bring the Lebanese Forces militia under control or to honor his commitment to deploy the Lebanese Army in the eastern portion of Beirut.

-- Most believe he has not been effective in resisting Israeli pressure and that Lebanon is giving too much away in the current negotiations.

-- There are indications that some of these groups and some non-Phalange Maronites may begin working against Jumayyil. [REDACTED]

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Jumayyil fears that an agreement on normalization before an Israeli withdrawal will reduce much of Lebanon to an Israeli protectorate.

-- If this happened, Syria and the Palestinians would refuse to withdraw their forces.

-- The result would probably be the de facto partition of Lebanon. [REDACTED]

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Resisting Israeli demands in the negotiations, on the other hand, also discourages Israeli withdrawal which is the sine qua non for Syrian and Palestinian departure.

-- It also increases Lebanese Forces impatience with Amin and could prompt them to overthrow his regime or compromise him so badly that he would be forced to resign. [REDACTED]

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Jumayyil's situation is further aggravated by continuing close contacts between Israeli Defense Minister Sharon and Lebanese Forces leaders.

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-- Many in the Lebanese Forces are backing Sharon's tough stance on the negotiations because they believe that only Israeli force will dislodge the Syrians.

-- Sharon has warned them that if Israel does not get its way, there will be no further Israeli assistance to the Lebanese Forces. [REDACTED]

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The security situation is deteriorating once again with renewed violence in the mountain suburbs around Beirut.

-- Over the weekend Syrian-backed Druze PSP forces bombarded Christian East Beirut, the first major attack since the civil war.

-- [REDACTED] the Phalange may be preparing for a major offensive against the Druze. Such a move could be the final blow to tentative moves toward national reconciliation and lead to renewed widespread factional fighting.

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-- The situation in the northern city of Tripoli remains calm but tense and there is a general belief that both the pro and anti Syrian combatants are using the present lull to rearm for another round of fighting. [REDACTED]

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Despite the appointment of a new Army Commander, there has been little progress toward the rebuilding of the Lebanese Army.

-- Recruitment efforts are not going well.

-- Efforts toward training and reequipping the Army have gotten off to a slow start.

-- The Army is still too weak for Amin to risk deployment beyond West Beirut into areas around the capital where

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there have been episodes of factional violence for the
past several months. [REDACTED]

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Lebanon is also plagued with economic problems and
Jumayyil's prospects for securing a financial base are crumbling.

-- The Lebanese Forces and other militias control a number of
lucrative "illegal ports," depriving the government of
millions in customs revenues--its prime source of income.

-- Lebanon's own Central Bank has refused to lend the
President foreign exchange for reconstruction until the
cash-starved Treasury gets better at collecting taxes.

-- The Arabs have postponed any aid at least until the
outcome of the current negotiations is known, and the
World Bank is also reluctant to make any loans. [REDACTED]

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SUBJECT: Talking Points on Israel, Lebanon, and Syria

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